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ABSTRACT

An evaluation was conducted of a summer institute on assessment in adult literacy held at the University of Pittsburgh. The summer institute was designed to enable program administrators and instructors to hear experts in the field of adult assessment discuss, in depth, the issues that are common to all adult literacy providers. Participants had opportunities to broaden their knowledge base about formal and informal assessment and to participate in problem-solving activities about assessment issues relevant to their day-to-day professional lives. Each participant received institute evaluation forms for the small group sessions, workshops, and overall effectiveness of the institute, including quality of the keynote addresses. The evaluation found that of the 95 participants, 43 percent were administrators, 37 percent were instructors, 12 percent were counselors, and 8 percent were volunteers. Fifty percent of the participants identified themselves as experienced in the area of adult literacy. The majority of participants agreed that the content of the workshops and small group sessions was relevant to their needs, well organized, and highly effective, with an adequate balance of information-giving, hands-on activities, and time to ask questions and interact. The study concluded that, overall, the institute was successful and accomplished its goals in addressing the needs of a diverse group of literacy providers. Recommendations to improve future workshops included the following: (1) keynote speakers need to incorporate adequate opportunities for group interaction; (2) keynote speakers need to provide practical examples so participants can make connections between theory and practice; (3) participants would benefit from more handouts so that they could review the materials; and (4) participants should be provided with lists of references. (The questionnaires used in the evaluation are included in the report.) (KC)

ED 376 361

Summer Institute: Focus On Assessment In Adult Literacy Education

Evaluation Report

by

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University of Pittsburgh

December, 1993

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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Summer Institute: Focus on Assessment in Adult Literacy Education

Introduction

An issue of importance across adult literacy programs is assessment and diagnosis. Adult literacy educators are concerned about the adequacy of measures used to determine learning gain and program impact. Moreover, there is much interest in alternative assessment and its potential as an interactive tool that informs instructional decision-making.

There are many unanswered questions in the field of adult literacy regarding how to choose appropriate test measures, how to use the information these measures yield, how to measure the actual impact of instruction, and how to develop and use informal assessment so that students, instructors, and program administrators have more comprehensive information about student learning and progress. This institute provided participants with a three-day comprehensive look at all these assessment issues in both a general way and in ways specific to the needs generated by particular types of programs. Participants had the opportunity to fill in knowledge gaps about assessment by hearing from nationally recognized leaders in the field, questioning them, and applying what they had learned under the guidance of knowledgeable professionals in the field of adult literacy.

Goals and Objectives

The overall goal of the institute was to enable program administrators and instructors to hear experts in the field of adult assessment discuss, in depth, the issues which are common to all adult literacy providers. All participants, regardless of experiential level, had opportunities to broaden their knowledge base about formal and informal assessment and participate in problem solving activities about assessment issues relevant to their day-to-day professional lives.

The objectives of the institute were to provide program administrators, novice instructors, and experienced instructors with opportunities to:

(1) Learn more about standardized and informal assessment measures, what they have to offer and their limitations;

(2) Learn more about specific instruments that are available for adult literacy providers to assess reading and writing and to inform instruction:

(3) Learn more about how to evaluate whether an instructional program is achieving its goals; and

(4) Interact with other adult literacy educators about assessment issues and tools.

Each of the objectives was addressed in three ways throughout the institute. First, all participants heard nationally known experts in the field of testing and assessment and began to develop a general knowledge base of standardized testing, informal assessment, and use of assessment to inform instruction. Second, participants engaged in small group experiences which enabled them to focus on areas of particular interest to them and further expand upon information received from keynote speakers. Finally, participants participated in workshop sessions to apply the knowledge they had acquired by becoming actively involved with colleagues in addressing issues of interest to them and finding solutions. Therefore, the institute's goals and objectives were met by beginning with the broad issues and providing opportunities for participants to address these issues as they relate to their specific program needs.

Procedures

The institute was designed to progress from the general to the specific. Therefore, each day began with a keynote address of general interest to all participants. After the keynote, participants chose from five small group sessions

for which they had preregistered. On day two of the institute, participants preregistered for both a small group session and a workshop session. (see Appendix A).

Institute activities involved participants in a variety of learning situations. All participants had the opportunity to attend information giving sessions, small group interactive sessions, and sessions focusing on authentic learning tasks.

Keynote addresses used a lecture format to convey information to the large group. Time was allotted for questions, so participants had some opportunity to address specific program needs.

Small group sessions combined information giving with group interaction. Many of these sessions involved people in problem-solving and discussion activities. Small group presenters brought hand-outs with information that could be used upon returning to participants' classrooms.

Workshop sessions offered minimal information giving and specifically focused on hands-on application. Each workshop presented a different type of assessment instrument, gave participants a chance to see it demonstrated, and enabled participants to engage in an authentic learning task using the instrument. Workshop presenters provided participants with numerous hand-outs such as copies of assessment instruments and instructional ideas to use in their own classrooms.

Keynote sessions were attended by all 95 participants. Small group session and workshop sessions were limited to 25 participants per session.

Evaluation Approach

At registration, each participant received an institute folder containing evaluation forms for the small group sessions, workshops, and overall effectiveness of the institute including the quality of the keynote addresses. (See Appendix B) The evaluation forms were completed and collected by volunteers from a local

literacy agency in an ongoing manner throughout the course of the institute. The information from these evaluations was compiled and the results summarized.

Evaluation Results

Analysis of results from the evaluation forms yielded information about: (1) the content, structure, and personal benefits of the small group sessions and workshops; (2) the quality of the keynote addresses; and (3) the overall quality and organization of the institute. Results are discussed in general terms and are combined by session type e.g. small group, workshop, keynote . Data from all small group sessions, workshops, keynote addresses, and overall effectiveness of the institute were also aggregated to assess overall impact. (see Table 1- 4)

Participants

Those who attended the workshop were generally a knowledgeable group of professionals who identified themselves as experienced (50%) in the area of adult assessment. Of the 95 participants, 43% were administrators, 37% were instructors, 12% were counselors, and 8% were volunteers.

Small Group Sessions.

Of the ten small group sessions conducted, the majority of participants agreed that the content of the sessions was relevant to their needs and well organized. Similarly, the majority felt strongly that there was adequate opportunities for group participation and interaction and sharing among the participants. In all small group sessions, participants overall indicated they left with new skills and techniques which would help them be more effective in their current position.

Evaluation results for the ten small group sessions indicated that the meetings were well received and highly effective. Specifically, 69% of the participants felt the session content was relevant to their needs and 84% believed the presentations were well organized. Sixty six percent felt the structure of the session allocated sufficient time for the presentations while 95% found the time

given for hands-on experiences was excellent, and 73% were satisfied with the time allotted for group interaction. Over 50% of the participants agreed that they had learned new skills and techniques from the presenters and that they had gained knowledge that would be useful in their current position. Sixty eight percent said that their interaction with the presenter was beneficial.

Workshops.

Like the small group sessions, the five workshops were received well. Overall, the participants agreed that the content was what they expected, relevant to their needs, and well organized. Participants were pleased with the pacing of the information presented. They seemed to feel that there was an adequate balance between information giving, hands-on activities, and time to ask questions and interact. For four of the five workshops, participants felt that they had acquired useful new skills and techniques that would help them in their current position. When asked how the workshops could improve, the majority of participants agreed that it would be helpful to have a break during a three hour workshop.

Overall evaluation results of the five workshops indicated that the workshops, like the small group sessions, were well received and useful. Specifically, in terms of content, 71% of the participants felt that the workshops met their needs and 84% found them to be well organized. Over 75% of participants responded positively to workshop structure. They believed that there was sufficient time allotted for presentation of material, for participation in activities, and for interaction and sharing among participants. Over 60% of participants felt they acquired new skills which they expected to use and new knowledge which would help them in their positions. Sixty six percent of participants felt interaction with workshop presenters was beneficial.

Keynote Addresses

For the three keynote addresses, the majority of participants agreed that the overall content and delivery of the presentations was excellent. Specifically, participants felt that keynoters provided them with new, useful information and interesting perspectives on adult reading assessment. They believed that the handouts would be helpful to them in their current positions. Participants overall felt that the personal interaction with the keynote speakers was beneficial.

Overall Effectiveness of the Institute

Overall, evaluation results of the institute were positive, indicating goals were met. Ninety two percent of those completing evaluation forms rated the organization of the institute as excellent or good. Ninety two percent felt the content of the sessions was excellent or good; 89% found the structure of the sessions to be excellent or good; and 90% felt that the institute was beneficial to adult educators.

Recommendations

Comments from keynote sessions, small group sessions, and workshops were generally laudatory and it was obvious that participants were actively involved in all facets of the Institute. Evidence of their interest in the topic came across in multiple comments requesting more time for all types of sessions. Assessment is a particularly complex issue and one hour sessions and even three hour workshops did not provide some participants with the indepth information they sought.

The purpose of the institute was to provide a broad based menu of options in the area of assessment and this was accomplished. Because of its general nature, however, it was not possible for participants to obtain an indepth understanding of any one aspect of assessment.

Some of the following recommendations may be helpful in developing future workshops. First, keynote speakers need to be encouraged to incorporate

adequate opportunities for group interaction so participants can ask questions and clarify issues. Second, keynote speakers need to be reminded to provide practical examples so participants can make the connections between theory and practice. Third, across all types of sessions, participants would benefit from more handouts so they could have the opportunity to walk away from presentations with something they could revisit at their leisure and/or share with colleagues. Finally, participants should be provided with lists of references so they could become more knowledgeable about where to find additional information to answer current and future questions.

Overall, this Institute was successful and accomplished its goals in addressing the needs of a diverse group of literacy providers. Participants were given a unique opportunity to find answers to complex assessment issues from among the most knowledgeable people in the field. As a result, literacy providers across the state should be using standardized measures with more understanding of the information they can and cannot yield, feel more confident about integrating other forms of assessment into their programs, and be more adept at using results of testing to inform instruction.

Table 1. **Summary of Small Group Sessions**

Small Groups

Content:	**Yes**	**To A Degree**	**No**
1. Relevant to my needs	72%	27%	1%
2. Well organized	88%	12%	0%
Structure:	**Excellent**	**Fair**	**Poor**
3. Time allocated for presentation was	64%	35%	1%
4. Time allocated for participation in activities was	70%	29%	1%
5. Time for interaction and sharing among participants was	72%	26%	2%
Results:	**Yes**	**To A Degree**	**No**
6. I have new skills and techniques I expect to use	60%	37%	3%
7. I gained knowledge that will help me in my position	69%	29%	2%
8. I benefited from interaction with the presenter	73%	24%	3%

Table 2. **Summary of Workshop Sessions**

	Workshops		
Content:	**Yes**	**To A Degree**	**No**
1. Relevant to my needs	71%	25%	4%
2. Well organized	84%	16%	0%
Structure:	**Excellent**	**Fair**	**Poor**
3. Time allocated for presentation was	72%	23%	5%
4. Time allocated for participation in activities was	72%	23%	5%
5. Time for interaction and sharing among participants was	80%	18%	2%
Results:	**Yes**	**To A Degree**	**No**
6. I have new skills and techniques I expect to use	60%	36%	4%
7. I gained knowledge that will help me in my position	64%	33%	3%
8. I benefited from interaction with the presenter	66%	33%	1%

Table 3. Summary of Responses to Keynote Addresses

	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor
Standardized Testing *Page Bristow*	46%	41%	11%	1%
Alternative Assessment *Susan Lytle*	42%	39%	17%	1%
Assessing Instruction to Inform *Nancy Padak*	72%	23%	5%	0%

Table 4. **Summary of Responses to Overall Institute**

	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor
Organization of the Institute	45%	47%	8%	0%
Content of the Sessions	45%	44%	11%	0%
Structure of the Sessions	32%	56%	11%	0%
Overall Benefit to Me as an Adult Literacy Educator	41%	46%	12%	1%

Appendix B

Summer Institute: Focus on Assessment Evaluation Form
SMALL GROUP SESSION - DAY 1

Please fill out one evaluation form for each small group session that you attend.

Small Group Title: _____ Presenter(s): _____

What is your level of expertise in the area of *adult literacy*?

Novice ____ Experienced ____ Administrator ____ Institute Volunteer ____

REACTION (Please check one response in each line)

Content:	Yes	To a Degree	No
1. Relevant to my needs	____	____	____
2. Well organized	____	____	____
Structure:	**Excellent**	**Fair**	**Poor**
3. Time allocated for presentation was	____	____	____
4. Time allocated for participation in activities was	____	____	____
5. Time for interaction and sharing among participants was	____	____	____
Results:	**Yes**	**To a Degree**	**No**
6. I have new skills and techniques I expect to use	____	____	____
7. I gained knowledge that will help me in my position	____	____	____
8. I benefitted from interaction with the presenter	____	____	____

How would you improve this session?

Additional Comments:

Summer Institute: Focus on Assessment Evaluation Form
SMALL GROUP SESSION - DAY 2

Please fill out one evaluation form for each small group session that you attend.

Small Group Title: _____ Presenter(s): _____

What is your level of expertise in the area of *adult literacy*?

Novice ____ Experienced ____ Administrator ____ Institute Volunteer ____

REACTION (Please check one response in each line)

Content:	Yes	To a Degree	No
1. Relevant to my needs	____	____	____
2. Well organized	____	____	____
Structure:	**Excellent**	**Fair**	**Poor**
3. Time allocated for presentation was	____	____	____
4. Time allocated for participation in activities was	____	____	____
5. Time for interaction and sharing among participants was	____	____	____
Results:	**Yes**	**To a Degree**	**No**
6. I have new skills and techniques I expect to use	____	____	____
7. I gained knowledge that will help me in my position	____	____	____
8. I benefitted from interaction with the presenter	____	____	____

How would you improve this session?

Additional Comments:

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Summer Institute: Focus on Assessment Evaluation Form
WORKSHOP - DAY 2

Workshop Title: _____ Presenter(s): _____

What is your level of expertise in the area of *adult literacy*?

Novice ____ Experienced ____ Administrator ____ Institute Volunteer ____

REACTION (Please check one response in each line)

Content:	Yes	To a Degree	No
1. Relevant to my needs	____	____	____
2. Well organized	____	____	____
Structure:	**Excellent**	**Fair**	**Poor**
3. Time allocated for presentation was	____	____	____
4. Time allocated for participation in activities was	____	____	____
5. Time for interaction and sharing among participants was	____	____	____
Results:	**Yes**	**To a Degree**	**No**
6. I have new skills and techniques I expect to use	____	____	____
7. I gained knowledge that will help me in my position	____	____	____
8. I benefitted from interaction with the presenter	____	____	____

How would you improve this workshop?

Additional Comments:

Summer Institute: Focus on Assessment Evaluation Form
SMALL GROUP SESSION - DAY 3

Please fill out one evaluation form for each small group session that you attend.

Small Group Title: _____ Presenter(s): _____

What is your level of expertise in the area of *adult literacy*?

Novice ____ Experienced ____ Administrator ____ Institute Volunteer ____

REACTION (Please check one response in each line)

Content:	Yes	To a Degree	No
1. Relevant to my needs	____	____	____
2. Well organized	____	____	____
Structure:	**Excellent**	**Fair**	**Poor**
3. Time allocated for presentation was	____	____	____
4. Time allocated for participation in activities was	____	____	____
5. Time for interaction and sharing among participants was	____	____	____
Results:	**Yes**	**To a Degree**	**No**
6. I have new skills and techniques I expect to use	____	____	____
7. I gained knowledge that will help me in my position	____	____	____
8. I benefitted from interaction with the presenter	____	____	____

How would you improve this session?

Additional Comments:

SUMMER INSTITUTE: FOCUS ON ASSESSMENT
EVALUATION FORM

Please help us plan for future institutes by completing the following:

General Information

Please indicate the following:

Days attended: Mon. ____, Tues. ____, Wed. ____.

What is your level of expertise in the area of *adult literacy*?

Novice ____ Experienced ____ Administrator ____ Institute Volunteer ____

Keynote Speakers
(Please rate each speaker whose session you attended. Please circle the appropriate number.)

Page Bristow
4 Excellent Presentation 3 Good 2 Average 1 Poor 0 Didn't Attend

Comments: _____

_____

Susan Lytle
4 Excellent Presentation 3 Good 2 Average 1 Poor 0 Didn't Attend

Comments: _____

_____

Nancy Padak
4 Excellent Presentation 3 Good 2 Average 1 Poor 0 Didn't Attend

Comments: _____

_____

Small Group and Workshop Sessions

Please list the presenters of each session that you attended and rate each as
(4) Excellent (3) Good (2) Average (1) Poor

1. Presenter: _____ Rating: _____
2. Presenter: _____ Rating: _____
3. Presenter: _____ Rating: _____

Panel Discussion

Program Evaluation:

4 Excellent 3 Good 2 Average 1 Poor

Overall Institute

Organization of the Institute:
4 Excellent Presentation 3 Good 2 Average 1 Poor 0 Didn't Attend

Comments: _____

_____

Content of Sessions:
4 Excellent Presentation 3 Good 2 Average 1 Poor 0 Didn't Attend

Comments: _____

_____

Structure of the Sessions:
4 Excellent Presentation 3 Good 2 Average 1 Poor 0 Didn't Attend

Comments: _____

_____

Overall benefit to me as an Adult Literacy Educator:
4 Excellent Presentation 3 Good 2 Average 1 Poor 0 Didn't Attend

Comments: _____

_____

Recommendations (Include suggestions for speakers and topics.)

(NOTE: You may adapt space as needed for the sections. However, limit the abstract to one page.)

ABSTRACT PAGE

Title: Summer Institute: Focus on Assessment In Adult Literacy Education

Project No.: 99-4003 Funding: $49,990

Project Director: Rita M. Bean Phone No.: (412) 648-1774

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Purpose:

The overall goal of the institute was to enable program administrators and instructors to hear experts in the field of adult assessment discuss, in depth, the issues which are common to all adult literacy providers. Participants had opportunities to broaden their knowledge base about formal and informal assessment and participate in problem solving activities about assessment issues relevant to their day-to-day professional lives.

Procedures:

On each day all participants had the opportunity to attend information giving sessions, small group interactive sessions, and sessions focusing on authentic learning tasks. Each participant received institute evaluation forms for the small group sessions, workshops, and overall effectiveness of the institute including the quality of the keynote addresses.

Summary of Findings:

Of the 95 participants, 43% were administrators, 37% instructors, 12% counselors, and 8% were volunteers. Fifty percent of the participants identified themselves as experienced in the area of adult literacy. The majority of participants agreed that the content of the workshops and small group sessionswas relevant to their needs, well organized, and highly effective, with an adequate balance between information giving, hands-on activities, and time to ask questions and interact.

Comments (Conclusions, Findings, Barriers, if any):

Overall, this institute was successful and accomplished its goals in addressing the needs of a diverse group of literacy providers. The following recommendations may be helpful in developing future workshops. First, keynote speakers need to incorporate adequate opportunities for group interaction. Second, keynote speakers need to provide practical examples so participants can make connections between theory and practice. Third, participants would benefit from more handouts so they could have the opportunity revisit information at their leisure and/or share with colleagues. Finally, participants should be provided with lists of references so they could become more knowledgeable about where to find additional information to answer current and future questions.

Products (if applicable):

Paper

Descriptors (To be completed only by Bureau staff):